

AmeriCorps*VISTA Progress Report

Legal Applicant: Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction

Project Name: Wisconsin DPI VISTA Project

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Grant Number: 06VSNWI009

Period Covered by this Report:

From: 09/29/2008 to 12/31/2008

Data Updates

# of VISTA Members on board at end of reporting period	18
# of Community Volunteers serving who are Baby Boomers	37
Dollar value of cash resources developed by VISTA Members	3615
# of Service Hours performed by Community Volunteers	2277
Dollar value of non-cash resources developed by VISTA Members	50450
# of VISTA Members supported by cost share	0
# of Community Volunteers serving	305

Member and Sponsor Development

	Americorps *VISTA Members	Supervisors	CNCS Funded	Funded by Other Source	Comments
On-Site Orientation	3	3	N	Y	
Community Outreach	18	5	Y	Y	
Community Volunteer Generation/Recruitment	5	0	Y	Y	
Effective Volunteer Management	4	3	Y	Y	
Resource Mapping	18	18	N	Y	
Resource Development/Fundraising	12	0	N	Y	
Grant Writing	12	0	N	Y	
Organizational Development	18	18	N	Y	
Performance Measures	18	18	N	Y	
Tracking Systems	3	3	N	Y	
Information Technology	18	18	N	Y	
Developing On-Site Orientations and Training Plans	0	3	N	Y	
Other (Please Specify)	23	19	N	Y	Regional Meetings: conflict management Building the Heart of Successful Schools: school climate

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Project Plan

Service Category: Other Education

Goals

The goal is to build capacity for establishing a research-based, effective, sustainable program of family-school-community partnerships in schools serving low-income children and their families.

VISTA members will serve as facilitators to help schools to establish Action Team for Partnership (ATP). The VISTAs and ATP members will receive training and support to engage families, school staff, and others to develop a family-school-community partnership infrastructure, following a research-based approach using the Six Types of Involvement.

Service Activities

Complete training in the Action Team for Partnerships process

Conduct assets map for school community

Survey Parents and Teachers on family involvement for baseline data

With supervisor and other leaders, facilitate the establishment of ATP (must have ownership of community) and help train ATP members.

Share assets map with ATP and facilitate additional data gathering, including the Starting Points Inventory on strengths of school partnerships

Provide support for the work of the ATP to get it firmly established, beginning with the development of a one-year action plan of partnership activities and practices that address school goals and include the Six Types of Partnerships (parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision making, and collaborating with the community).

Support the ATP in holding regular meetings and work with it to accomplish the work plan, including recruiting volunteers and participants at events and activities.

Monitor the results of the ATP.

With ATP, organize and hold end-of-year celebration

With supervisor, complete biweekly and quarterly reports to DPI.

Survey parents and staff at end of school year to compare to baseline data.

With supervisor, complete end-of-year UPDATE for the National Network of Partnership Schools.

Result Type	Output	Performance Measure : X
Results		
	Action Teams for Partnerships established. ATP members are trained.	
Planned Period of Accomplishment		Actual Period of Accomplishment
Q1-2		Q2
Indicator		
	Number of sites with Action Teams formed.	
Target # (number) or % (percent)		Actual # or % to date
100 %		85
How Measured		
	Sign-in sheet	
Description of Data Collection		
	Membership list, which includes at least 2 parents, 2 teachers, and 2 other staff.	
Progress this Reporting Period		
	VISTAs have had great success in developing Action Teams this quarter to better engage low-income families in decision making processes. All but three sites have functioning teams. Of these remaining sites, two have just begun their service and will have a team in the next quarter and the third site is placed at a five agency consortium and is working with all to determine the best strategy for putting together a worthwhile ATP.	

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Result Type	Output	Performance Measure : X
Results		
VISTAs map community assets and collect data on school climate.		
Planned Period of Accomplishment		Actual Period of Accomplishment
Q1		Q1
Indicator		
Number of community asset maps submitted to DPI.		
Target # (number) or % (percent)		Actual # or % to date
100 %		100
How Measured		
Community Partner Survey		
Description of Data Collection		
community asset mapping		
Progress this Reporting Period		
All August-start VISTAs have completed the asset-mapping process and our three December-start VISTAs are currently mapping. We expect them to be completed by the end of the next quarter.		

Result Type	Output	Performance Measure : X
Results		
VISTAs submit grants and procure in-kind donations for ATP programs and initiatives.		
Planned Period of Accomplishment		Actual Period of Accomplishment
Q1-4		Q1-4
Indicator		
Number of grants submitted.		
Target # (number) or % (percent)		Actual # or % to date
20 #		7
How Measured		
Sustainability Checklist		
Description of Data Collection		
Pre/post surveys, bi-weekly and quarterly reports, and community asset map will also be used. Twelve grants will have been written and submitted by VISTAs.		
Progress this Reporting Period		
Several of our VISTAs have made grant-writing their top priority. Chris Briggs, serving in Wausau, has applied for three grants to fund family programming with the early childhood program. Brendan Gants has applied for two grants through his site in Milwaukee- the Business and Economics Academy of Milwaukee. Finally, Matt Dolezal in Appleton has written and received a \$1,000 grant for Franklin Elementary learning disabled students.		

Result Type	Intermediate Outcome	Performance Measure : X
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Results

Sites will implement family-school-community practices that address their school's goals to improve academic achievement.

Planned Period of Accomplishment

Q1-4

Actual Period of Accomplishment

Q1-4

Indicator

Number of activities/practices implemented.

Target # (number) or % (percent)

120 #

Actual # or % to date

60

How Measured

Activity log

Description of Data Collection

Action Plans and agendas of activities, as well as project descriptions, will be submitted by the VISTAs in bi-weekly and quarterly reports. Each VISTA will coordinate at least six family-school-community events or initiatives.

Progress this Reporting Period

Our VISTA members have all worked to plan and implement at least one activity with their Action Teams to engage families at their sites. Many VISTAs have planned more than one activity. Chris Briggs, serving in Wausau, has coordinated over 12 family-school-community events that bring in both families and the community to the early childhood program in the Wausau area. These have included "Parents Night Out" events which provide an opportunity for parent networking and collaboration as well as multiple "Let's Build It" programs which bring families together to work on small building projects courtesy of Home Depot staff and resources. Because of the strong connections our VISTAs make in their communities and in their sites, events are well attended and supported by local businesses. Stephanie Jung, serving in Milwaukee, was able to procure donations of food and drink for all of her Action Team meetings and family events.

Result Type	End Outcome	Performance Measure : X
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Results

Schools will have an identified process for partnerships that includes the Action Team for Partnerships.

Planned Period of Accomplishment

end of school year

Actual Period of Accomplishment

end of school year

Indicator

Percent of Action Teams that have started work on next year action plan.

Target # (number) or % (percent)

100 %

Actual # or % to date

0

How Measured

NA

Description of Data Collection

By end of year, all sites will have started plans for next year. Instrument: Year-end UPDATE form completed and returned to the DPI and the NNPS for analysis.

Progress this Reporting Period

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This data is not yet available but will be reported on in a future Progress Report.

Result Type	End Outcome	Performance Measure : X
Results		
More parents will feel welcome in their children's school, have an understanding of the importance of being involved in their children's learning, and know how to participate to help their children.		
Planned Period of Accomplishment	Actual Period of Accomplishment	
school year	end of school year	
Indicator		
Increase in the percent of parents indicating positive attitudes on end of year survey		
Target # (number) or % (percent)	Actual # or % to date	
20 %	0	
How Measured		
Pre/Post test		
Description of Data Collection		
VISTAs will randomly survey at least 25 parents at the beginning of the school year with a base-line survey and then again at the end of the school year.		
Progress this Reporting Period		
Our base line data has been collected but we will have to wait until the end of the school year to know if parents attitudes' towards the schools have increased.		

Narratives

Partnership/Collaboration Development

The DPI VISTA Project is working to strengthen partnerships with the following organizations/programs:

Wisconsin Campus Compact
Parents Plus
Other teams at DPI

We feel our partnership with WiCC is strong; as we plan to coordinate recruitment efforts in the spring and pool resources. We also plan to again offer our Life after VISTA Teleconference to members from both projects and. Finally, we will invite all WiCC members to attend our Sustainability Webinar in June.

The partnership with Parents Plus has been strengthened as they work to provide resources to all of our sites, not just those in Milwaukee. The PIRC Director has been communicating with our members state wide and offering the resources of the PIRC to their sites and their communities.

This quarter we have further developed a partnership effort with other teams at DPI including Student Services, Prevention and Wellness, Special Education, Public Library Development, and School Nutrition. Collaboration with these teams have resulted in new host sites, relevant materials and resources for our members, as well as opportunities for our VISTA members to serve on inter-agency committees and work groups. For instance, the Student Services, Prevention and Wellness Team has invited 4 VISTA members to serve as Community Learning Center grant readers in February.

Other Accomplishments

Supervisor Teleconferences

Due to the importance of the site supervisor, we are making a more focused effort to reach site supervisors every two months via teleconference. These meetings allow us to address any questions or concerns that arise related to the VISTA grant but also gives us the opportunity to discuss grant progress and future goals with each site. Site Supervisors have been open and receptive to the meetings and value the opportunity to connect with each other and share resources state wide.

Site Visits

Due to the addition of a half-time Project Coordinator, we were able to successfully visit all of our VISTA sites and conduct a site visit. These meetings were a way to check in on initial progress of all sites and also share resources from the DPI. VISTAs and Supervisors were encouraged to share successes, challenges, and plans for the rest of the year. Sustainability and the VAD were two primary topics of conversation. Information gathered from these site visits informed the development of resources and the agendas for future teleconferences/webinars.

Multi-Site Performance

Since we are a multi-site project, communication has been identified as the key to ensuring that our sites not only understand expectations but are meeting those expectations.

We communicate with the VISTA members in the following ways:

Bi-Weekly Reports
Quarterly Reports
Written feedback on all reports
VISTA Blog
Monthly Teleconferences/Webinars
VISTA Project List-serv
Monthly Newsletters
Check-in phone calls/emails from Project Coordinator
Site Visits
Project Evaluation
Exit Interviews

Narratives

We communicate with the VISTA Supervisors in the following ways:

- Bi-Weekly Reports
- Quarterly Reports
- Written feedback on all reports
- Bi-monthly Teleconferences
- VSITA Project List-serv
- Monthly Newsletters (featuring a Supervisor Segment)
- Check-in phone calls/emails from Project Coordinator
- Site Visits
- Project Evaluation
- Exit Interviews

Especially useful this past quarter has been the written feedback provided on all reports by the Project Coordinator. This feedback not only points supervisors and members to resources, but also asks follow up questions on certain projects and programs. This ensures a regular dialogue with all of our sites.

Recruitment

We successfully recruited three new VISTA members to begin their service in early December. Brittany Williams is serving with the Wisconsin Educational Opportunity Program (WEOP) in Madison, Dustin Young is serving with the Dane County Transitional High School in Madison, and Nicole Stachurski is serving at Grove Elementary School in Wisconsin Rapids. All three of these VISTAs bring a great deal of assets and skills to their positions.

Furthermore, each of their sites is new to our project and we are excited to be expanding our program to work with new sites and new communities.

Finally, we have successfully recruited a VISTA Leader to begin her service in February of 2009. Casey Gauthier is currently serving as a VISTA in Rhinelander and will continue to serve the district while she assumes Leader duties and responsibilities. She will be working closely with the Project Coordinator.

Challenges

We have identified one primary challenge to our work this quarter. We need to be more thoughtful of how we engage those we are serving and supporting as equal partners in our work. This applies at the Project Level here at DPI as well as at the local level with our host sites. It is important that we do not lose site of the purpose of our work- to build capacity empowerment in others to be successful. We are in the process of addressing this challenge at the project level by giving more ownership to the VISTA members and supervisors. We solicit their feedback on a regular basis and have good tools for them to evaluate their experiences. Particularly with the VISTA members- we hope to give them more leadership in this program. This can be done through leading our monthly meetings, participating in focus groups, having a say in recruitment decisions at their sites, contributing articles and stories to our monthly newsletters, and finally, helping to shape next year's orientation and training opportunities.

At the site level, we are working with the VISTA members to ask themselves these key questions: 1) How am I engaging those I am serving in decision making, 2) How am I building capacity at my site for OTHERS to do the work I am doing now? And 3) How am I ensuring that these projects and programs reflect the site and the families and not necessarily my own interests?

Resource Development

This quarter has been a very successful one for us in terms of resource development. Our members have recruited over 300 volunteers who have served over 2,000 hours! However, our real success has been in terms of in-kind goods and services donated to our sites. Two VISTAs in particular procured over \$34,000 of our total amount. Robyn Krimke and Stephanie Jung, both serving in Milwaukee, organized and implemented numerous successful events at their sites. For example, Stephanie's Sister School Program brought in over \$10,000 worth of items for holiday baskets for BEAM families. This included food, clothing, toys, and other items. Additionally, Robyn Krimke received over \$19,000 in food, gift certificates, and other prizes for Family night events at U.S. Grant. These were from local area businesses and restaurants.

Stories

Narratives

Casey Gauthier, Rhinelander

At Pelican Elementary School in the School District of Rhinelander, 3rd graders participated in a Vote for Books during the first week of November to coincide with the Presidential Election. The purpose was to encourage kids to be aware of what is going on in the world of politics and learn the basics of voting. They voted on two books and a copy of the winning book was given to a randomly selected student in each of the three classrooms. This was a great way to tie in civic engagement with our focus on the importance of literacy!

Stephanie Jung, Milwaukee

We are working on a Sister School program between our school, BEAM and a Menomonee Falls School, Thomas Jefferson Middle School. TJ collected a lot of toys and books for the students/families at BEAM during the holiday season and our goal is to reciprocate. In the next 2 months BEAM will be organizing a Valentine's Day themed project to send to the other Middle School as well as a thank you book the art teacher is working on. Through this program I hope we can link two communities and share the resources we each can offer.

Brittany Pensis, Shawano

Along with our local Head Start, we planned 8 parenting sessions/workshops for this school year. The first one was called Parents, Pizza, and Planes and was geared towards encouraging fathers to spend time with their children and discussing the importance of quality play time. Pizza and juice were provided through the REACH grant, and fathers had a great time networking with each other and having fun with their children.

Brendan Gants, Milwaukee

At BEAM, Stephanie Jung and I put on a Harvest Fest Family Fun Night. The event featured fun and educational activities that parents can do at home with their children to improve their study skills. I also gave Parents' Plus "No Child Left Behind" presentation to the parents during dinner, integrating opportunities for interaction with the parents and information about how to get more involved at BEAM. The event was a major success, with about 175 people in attendance.

Chad Olle, West Allis

At Dottke Alternative High School, our Action Team for Partnerships is up and running. We have some great parents recruited as well as the Principal and teachers. Most importantly, we found that asking parents to help engage other parents was the most successful strategy- it was not intimidating and it gave them ownership of the team. This combined with phone calls from parent volunteers, the AT meeting being added to the calendar and newsletter, and phone calls from the principal to participants in PT3, should make for a great next meeting!

Attachments and Links

Sustainability Worksheet from Stephanie Jung, Milwaukee
Walking School Bus Brochure from Renee Hinn, Oshkosh
Parent Calls Script from Brittany Williams, Madison
Pay it Forward Materials from Dustin Young, Madison

News article on Wausau Basketball Camp by Chris Briggs, Wausau
<http://www.postcrescent.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=200990120201>

Pictures from family events from Chris Briggs, Wausau
<http://dpivista.blogspot.com/2009/01/pictures-from-last-quarter.html>

October, November, and December VISTA Project Monthly Newsletters

Brochures from conferences (VISTA workshops at each)

Training/Technical Assistance Needs

The following have been identified by our members and supervisors as training needs:

Grant Writing/Fundraising
Working with the Media/Promotion
Using the 6 Types of Family Involvement framework at a community-based site.

Narratives

We are working to address all of these needs in the following quarter. While we did offer a Grant Writing Webinar in October for our members, we plan to offer it again in the spring. This webinar was designed and facilitated by a former VISTA. Additionally, we are working with one of our Supervisors in the Wausau area with public relations experience to put together a "Working with the Media" training to be conducted in early spring.

Additionally, we are working more closely with our community based sites to ensure that they are provided with relevant and useful resources. Because they are not hosted by a school or school system, they meet unique challenges in this project. We have connected them to one another to communicate regularly, are providing community-based specific resources in the newsletter, modifying school based tools for their sites, and finally, creating an open forum to collect feedback and suggestions for supporting community based sites in the future.

Sustainability

Sustainability continues to be a top priority for our project and we are providing necessary support to our sites in this area. Additionally, we are developing tools to assist our VISTAs in thinking about sustaining their work from the beginning of the year. We feel that through the Action Team for Partnerships process, we are providing a structure for continued sustainability as these teams consist of community members, school staff, and parents who will continue partnerships after the VISTA ends his or her service. We encourage our VISTAs to empower the Action Teams to take ownership of projects and programs to build the needed capacity at their sites.

Additionally, we are dividing our annual Sustainability Webinar into two sections; one this quarter and the second in June. We would like our sites to think about sustainability throughout the year, not just at the end. The webinar not only allowed members to share their ideas for sustainability but it will help inform the resources we will develop for their use.

Finally, we have developed a Sustainability Worksheet that all VISTAs submitted along with their Quarterly Report documenting the progress on key elements of sustainable practice. These sheets also serve as tools for the members themselves and they will be revisited towards the end of their service year.